

Dear {{FirstName or 'Friend'}},


A few days ago, we witnessed a tragedy with the fatal collision involving a commercial plane and U.S. Army helicopter from Fort Belvoir at Washington National Airport.

Please hold the victims and their loved ones in your prayers.
Thank you to the work of our first responders who assisted.
Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) is providing support and crisis counseling for students, staff, and families. FCPS has also provided a [resource page](#) that may help navigate difficult conversations on this topic with children.

This week, in addition to having several pieces of my legislation advance out of the Senate, we also had students from the 36th District participate in my inaugural High School Leadership Program. I hope you will read on for more updates from the week and local resources.



Sen. Pekarsky in the News



VOICE OF STEPHANIE KIM, HANOVER COUNTY PARENT

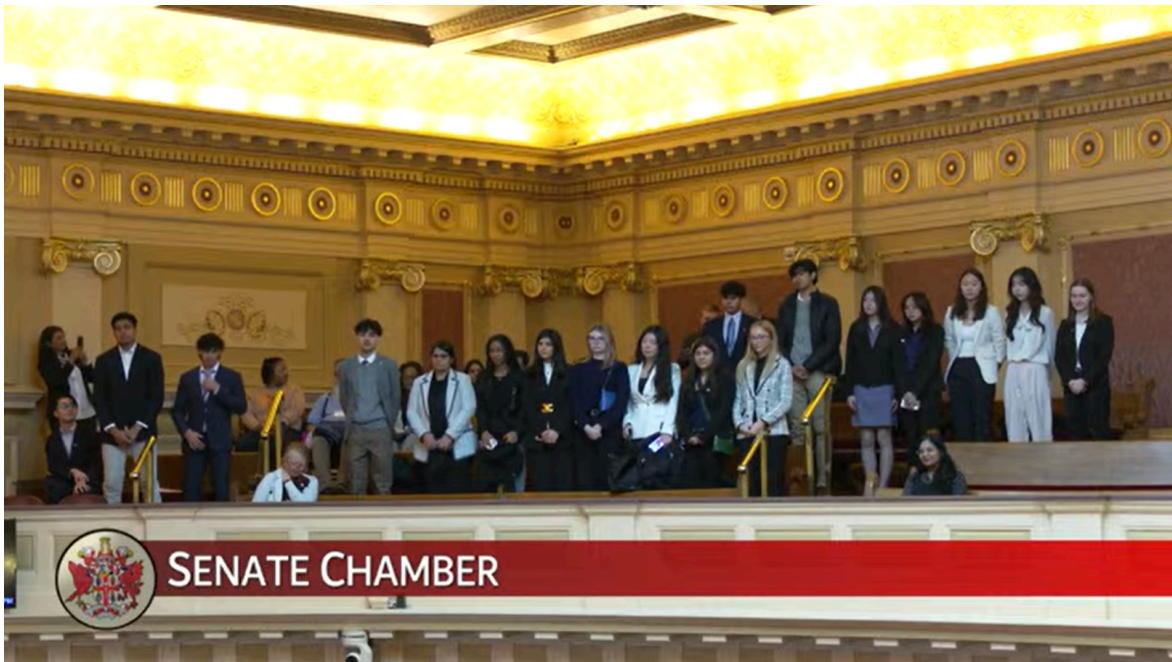
"They are responsible for hiring our superintendent and administrators. They set policies that directly affect my child, yet I have no direct say in the representatives who make these decisions."

JANUARY 23, 2025

WTVR CBS 6 in Richmond covered SB 1404; which requires that the remaining appointed school boards in Virginia have elections to decide their members. I believe that voters should have a say in who represents them and their children on the school board, and that **members are accountable to the public - not other elected members that appoint them.**

[Watch and listen here](#)

The Pekarsky 2025 High School Leadership Program



This week, Senator Pekarsky hosted her inaugural High School Leadership Program and welcomed a group of high school students representing Centreville, Chantilly, Westfield, Mountain View, and Oakton High Schools and Robinson Secondary School. Our office received over 90 applicants, and we were pleased to select a diverse and talented group of future leaders.

Students had the opportunity to see the Virginia General Assembly in action by attending committee hearings, touring the Capitol, viewing the Senate and House floor sessions, having dinner with the Senator, and participating in panels with lobbyists, advocates, the Virginia Secretary of Health, Senate staff, and more!

Senator Pekarsky hopes that every student who participated in the program will have a better understanding of state government and be inspired to pursue careers in public service. Our office looks forward to welcoming another great cohort of students in 2026!

Statement on the Possible Referendum on the Fairfax Casino

When I was elected to represent the 36th Senate District, one of my top priorities was to work to find a way to fund public education and lower the burden of property taxes that so many of us feel in the district.

I don't have all of the answers, but I know that this has the potential to bring major economic development and much needed revenue diversity to Fairfax County along with 5000 well-paying jobs. I believe that because of this, our community deserves to have a robust discussion at the local level to hear from stakeholders that have not been involved in the state process.

The Board of Supervisors may not choose to move forward with that opportunity, and that is their right. The bottom line is that for years, the Board has been asking for varied revenue streams so that we can fully fund our public schools, public safety and fire departments, and ensure that we don't need to continue only raising property taxes. Currently, there have been no alternative ideas brought forth to close the significant state and local revenue gaps that we are currently facing. This legislation will continue that conversation and give the people of Fairfax the power of the ultimate decision.

Bills on the Move

Bills Pass the Senate

THE SENATE OF VIRGINIA

S.B. 1032. (Pekarsky) **P22**

**Public elementary and secondary schools;
teacher's terms of employment, etc.***

YEAS: 38 **NAYS: 1** **R36: 0**

YEA Aird	YEA Ebbin	YEA McDougle	YEA Rouse
YEA Bagby	YEA Favola	YEA McPike	YEA Salim
YEA Boysko	French	YEA Mulchi	YEA Srinivasan
YEA Carroll Foy	YEA Hackworth	YEA Obenshain	YEA Stanley
NAY Cifers	YEA Hashmi	YEA Peake	YEA Stuart
YEA Craig	YEA Head	YEA Pekarsky	YEA Sturtevant
YEA Deeds	YEA Jordan	YEA Perry	YEA Suetterlein
YEA DeSteph	YEA Locke	YEA Pillion	YEA Surovell
YEA Diggs	YEA Lucas	YEA Reeves	YEA VanValkenburg
YEA Durant	YEA Marsden	YEA Roem	YEA Williams Graves

Three bills unanimously passed the Senate this week:

SB 738: Requires school boards to develop and implement policy for restricting cell phone use in the classroom during regular school hours. Last year, Governor Youngkin announced Executive Order 33, which began the discussion on cell phone use in schools and offered non-binding recommendations on how schools can deal with this issue. This bill differs from the Governor's policy in four key aspects:

SB 1030: Requires that your child's sports physical for middle school and high school athletics only needs to be updated every 14 months. Currently, parents must have their child's sports physical completed in a small window - burdening both parents and providers.

SB 1032: Ensures a teacher with a continuing contract has the right to a salary and benefits between school years. This prevents teachers who have earned continuing contract status, including those with decades of dedicated service, are not vulnerable to termination at the end of the school year without any due process.

SB 1034: Mandates that teachers must be trained in instructing students who need or use Augmentative and

Alternative Communication devices before the start of the school year so they can adequately work with the student.

SB 1035: Revises the section of the Drug Control Act related to professional use by practitioners to add “or other opioid antagonists” following each mention of naloxone, a widely used opioid antagonist.

SB 1038: Directs the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services to develop best practice educational training for healthcare providers on how to conduct telehealth visits for patients with disabilities.

SB 1212: Bans undisclosed mandatory fees, also known as “junk fees”. Consumer Reports estimates that junk fees cost the average family of four more than \$3,200 annually. This is a heavy economic burden for many Virginia families.

SB 1269: Supporting the VRE by saving them \$100,000 annually on repetitive tax payments.



Bills Now Before the Senate

SB 1039 **9:07 AM**
SENATE OF VIRGINIA
 Rehabilitation and Social Services

SB 1039: DOC and State Board of Local and Regional Jails; policies on inmate participation in telehealth.
Patron: Stella G. Pekarsky
Motion: Report

YEAS: 15 NAYS: 0 ABS: 0

Yea	Carroll Foy	Yea P	Perry
Yea P	Craig	Yea	Reeves
Yea	DeSteph	Yea	Rouse
Yea	Favola	Yea	Salim
Yea	French	Yea	Surovell
Yea P	Head	Yea	VanValkenburg
Yea	Jordan	Yea	Williams Graves
Yea P	McDougle		

SB 1036: Protects school employees who administer a student’s prescribed seizure rescue medication from liability when the student is believed to be or about to be experiencing a seizure.

SB 1037: There is a mental health crisis in our schools, and this bill would **allow school boards to permit the offering of telehealth services during regular school hours** for students with parental consent.

SB 1039: Gives the State Board of Local and Regional Jails the ability to develop policies on inmate participation in telehealth appointments, including policies on designating a private space for those appointments to occur. The bill is a policy recommendation by the Joint Commission on Health Care.

SB 1188: Directs the regulatory boards at the Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation to develop regulations creating a licensure pathway for qualified international professionals by giving credit for documentable and verifiable international training and/or certification. This includes architects, realtors, tattoo artists, and more.

Autism Speaks 2024 Public Service Award



This week Autism Speaks awarded Sen. Pekarsky with the 2024 Public Service Award for outstanding service to the Autism Community.

2025 Resolution Nominations



Resolution Nominations

Do you know a business, organization who has served our community well? Do you want to honor a community member or loved one who has passed?

Submit their information to be considered for a commending or memorial resolution

SenatorPekarsky@Senate.Virginia.Gov

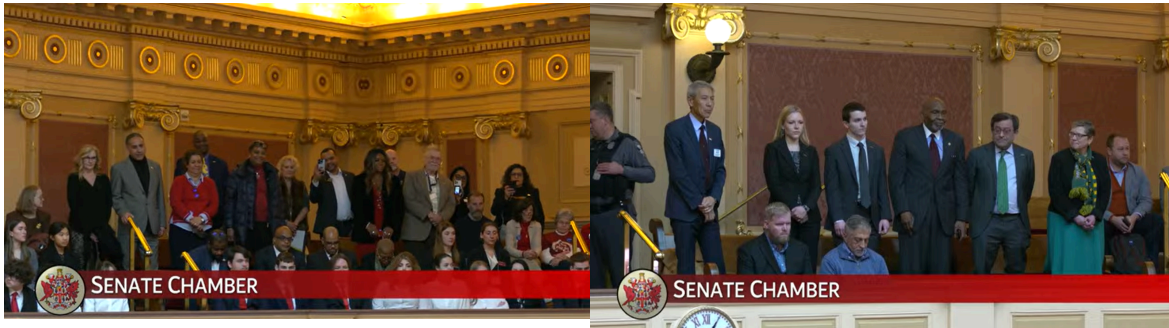
Our office is currently accepting commending and memorial resolution nominations ahead of the upcoming 2025 legislative session.

The Virginia Senate and House have the opportunity to acknowledge and commend individuals and organizations that serve our community, in the official record. We also do memorial resolutions for people who have a lasting impact, who have passed.

Resolution proposals are voted on by the entire body to acknowledge significant community members' achievements. **Do you or someone you know have a proposal for a resolution?**

Please let us know at SenatorPekarsky@Senate.Virginia.Gov.

Introducing Visitors to the Senate



Northern Virginia Association of Realtors

Northern Virginia Community College

This week, Sen. Pekarsky introduced several groups and individuals on the Senate floor. These include leadership from the Northern Virginia Community College visited and two current students, the Northern Virginia Association of Realtors, and The Very Rev. Protopresbyter Nicholas G. Bacalis, the Dean of the Saints Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Richmond, Virginia.

Meeting with Constituents



Centreville Immigration Forum

This week, our office met with constituents and several organizations including the NASA, the Virginia Education Association (VEA), the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) of Greater Washington and the Centreville Immigration Forum.



NASA

Virginia Education Association (VEA)



Service Employees International Union (SEIU)

Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) of Greater Washington

Local Resources LGBTQIA+



There has been increased anxiety in our LGBTQ+ community since the start of the Trump Administration. Here is a list of local, state, and national resources for support and community.

- **Safe Space NOVA**
- **Transgender Assistance Program of Virginia**
- **PFLAG Metro DC**
 - **Fairfax Adult Group**
Meeting day and time: First Wednesday of each month from 7:30 to 9:00 PM. Location: In person Contact: fairfaxpflag@gmail.com
 - **Fairfax FLY - Youth Group (12-17-y/o)**
Meeting day and time: First Wednesday of each month from 7:30 to 9:00 PM. Location: In person Contact: fairfaxpflag@gmail.com
 - **Fairfax Trans Families**
Meeting day and time: Third Sunday of each month from 2:30 to 4:00 PM. Location: Online, via Zoom Contact: TransFamiliesVA@gmail.com (202) 460-6002 (texts only, please)
- **Crisis Intervention:**
- **The Trevor Project:** (866) 488-7386
 - The Trevor Project is the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) young people ages 13-24.
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:** (800) 273-8255 (online chat available)
 - The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is a national network of local crisis centers that provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- **Crisis Text Line:** Text START to 741-741
 - Crisis Text Line is free, 24/7 support for those in crisis. Text from anywhere in the USA to text with a trained Crisis Counselor.

- **The LGBT National Hotline:** (888) 843-4564
 - Both provide telephone, online private one-to-one chat and email peer-support, as well as factual information and local resources for cities and towns across the United States.
 - **The LGBT National Youth Talkline:** (youth serving youth through age 25): (800) 246-7743
 - **Trans Lifeline:** (877) 565-8860
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Stay informed about what is happening in Richmond and around the 36th District.



It is a pleasure to serve you in the 36th District

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**Cheers,
Stella Pekarsky
Senator, District 36**

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